



## AL-BARADOUNI'S AUDITORY IMAGERY TO THE STRUGGLES OF YEMENI WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

Historically Yemeni women had endured many physical and psychological struggles. They experienced injustice and discrimination. Struggles caused by so many political, social and cultural norms practiced in the community. Lately, the government of Yemen has made substantial efforts to egalitarian competition in many fields of life. Thus, this literary analytic study is to primarily inspect a frequent use of auditory imagery in Al-Baradouni's poetry voicing up unarticulated emotional struggles that Yemeni women had encountered. Although the poet lost his eyes vision at a young age however his hearing sense helped him perceive and express that social harshness practiced. Harsh struggles such as the loss of husbands in battlefields, forced marriages, grief over the dead, and finally dedication to their physically challenged kids.

Keywords: auditory imagery, struggles, translated poetry, Yemeni woman, Arabic poetry, Al-Baradouni, Advocacy.

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### 1.0 Al-Baradouni as an Advocate of Yemeni Women

Abdullah Al-Baradouni (1929–1999) was born in the village of al-Baradoun in Al-Hada district of Dhamar governorate, Yemen. He a very young age was infected by smallpox which caused him to lose his sight when he was five or six years old. His blindness brought him to learning the Quran, language and Arabic poetry from the traditional teachers in his village and the village of al-Mahallah in Ans district. His thirst for knowledge increased when he studied at the al-Shamsiah School in Dhamar. Al-Baradouni was described by most critics as one of the best contemporary Arabic poets to enrich Arabic literature.

Hence he worked as a teacher of literature in the Dar al-Uloum School in Sana'a before the 26 September 1962 revolution. He also worked as a language editor and the program director in Radio. He was also a journalist and writer for a number of national and international newspapers. Such a strong profile made him aware of the past and present of Yemenis and Arabs in fields of politics and social sciences.

In his poetry, the readers cannot only discover a political awareness which subjected him to injustices, loss and confiscation of his writings, but also learns about the advanced philosophical awareness in writing about history. This type of awareness according to (al-Kumaim) who states:

It exceeded a descriptive writing about history and transforms into a new historicism, and from a history of events to a history of ideas. This meant that Al-Baradouni did not present history from an official narrative, but from the point of view of the people which he chose as a specific method of writing about

history. This methodology gave him the ability to criticize the official historiography and uncover what had been ignored, as well as foresee what could happen in the future.

Although Al-Baradouni wrote so many poems portraying and enchanting the beauties of women but in an interview with him on TV he stated that he was a lawyer that defended women who confronted injustices in the community, pleading their cases in courts. He said people used to describe him as *Muhami Al-Mutalaqat or Al-Mourmalat* "The Advocate of Divorced or Widowed", a nick-name that was used to shame him in the halls of court. His defense to Yemeni women was not only in the courts and in front of judges but it was beautifully inscribed in his poetry even at the level of the emotional (Al-Baradouni).

## 2.0 Al-Baradouni's Auditory Imagery to the Struggles of Yemeni Women:

Women in Yemen have historically been placed at a disadvantage due to their sex with a highly patriarchal society (Lackner 114). After 1970 there were far-reaching changes in the law itself as well as in the legal system. These were justified as attempts to transform the law in accordance with the egalitarian principles of the Constitution and with the government's claim to represent the interests of working people (Molyneux 247). The government of Yemen has made efforts that can lessen the struggles of women in many aspects in life however there are a few cultural and social norms that still cause women emotional struggle.

This emotional struggle sometimes begins when men join fighting or emigrate to provide better living conditions leaving women behind to manage households on their own. These women often struggle to access basic services, suffer war traumas while keeping in mind how to protect themselves and their children. That drove the Yemeni poet Al-Baradouni to commemorate that emotional pain in his poetry.

Ever since the poet was blinded at a young age by the smallpox, the degree of absorbing cultural and social issues was evolved through his hearing sense. Thus the use of Auditory Imagery is obvious in his poetry. It is used to explain things, ideas and actions using sounds that appeal to our sense of hearing. It is intended to invoke up sound images in the minds of the readers. It also means to use words and literary devices in a way that they make readers experience sounds when reading poetry or prose. It gives the writers a tool to make their texts vibrant and gripping with the use of the words targeting to the sense of hearing of the readers. In fact, it is deliberately inserted to evoke sensory experiences. In this sense, it makes the text appealing to the ears. Its pivotal role is to make the readers connect to the text. It is written as a phrase of two words auditory and imagery. It means that it is related to the images of sounds that we feel in our ears through words.<sup>1</sup>

The following research is going to investigate the struggles of women which were absorbed by the poet on a daily basis employing auditory imageries. There are many poems that he wrote about women and their struggles but the focus will be on four poems that obviously depict various types of struggle. The poems have been translated from Arabic into English taking in mind the importance of delivering the real meanings of used translated passages and on the other hand the difficulty to deliver the literary devices such as the rhyming system and rhythms. These poems have been taken from two important poetry collections called *Mm Ardh Biliqis* "From the land of Sheba" and *Mdyenat Alqad* "The City of Tomorrow". The poems are *Amrah Alfaqeed* "The Wife of the Lost", *Aroos Alhuzen* "The Bride of Sorrow", *Thakala Bela Za-air* "The Bereaved with no Visitor" and finally *Ummi* "My Mother".

## 2.1 The Struggle of the Lost in Wars:

The first issue that needs to be investigated in the poems of Al-Baradouni is the issue of married men going to war and neither come back nor being announced dead. In Yemen, women suffer silently the pain of losing husbands in a war. The ugly side is the fact that it is socially forbidden to voice up such misery because it can shame women forever so that pain is detained in the hearts of women. The poem *Amrah Alfaqeed* "The Wife of the Lost" is taken from his third poetry collection called *Mdyenat Alqad* "The City of Tomorrow".

<sup>1</sup> See Auditory Imagery. "Examples and Definition of Auditory Imagery - Literary Devices." *Literary Devices*, 18 Mar. 2019, literarydevices.net/auditory-imagery/. Accessed 3 Aug. 2020.

Though Al-Baradouni was a blind man but his ability to hear the groaning and crying of the main persona in the poem is really unique. The story of a woman whose husband left and never returned and every time a group of soldiers returns she goes running searching for him among the crowds but in vain. The auditory imagery appears when the poet fuses the silence and the act of listening to the noises made outside the house. Every time her journey of search fails, she returns home like a broken bird, suffering the silence of the walls while the noises of the rain badly disturb her from hearing or listening to the steps of whoever is coming or approaching the house. (Line 13-16) the horror of losing her husband forever by letting the silence of the roof questions her beautiful cheeks which uncover the terror that her body holds before her mind.

I am just as quiet as the walls	وسهدت والجدران تصغي مثلما
Both listening to the cough of a blind wound	أصغي ، وتسعل كالجريح الساهد
And the roof asks my cheeks for whom they are?	والسقف يسأل وجنتي لمن هما ؟
To whom this mouth?	ولمن فمي ؟ وغرور صدري الناهد؟
And to whom the vanity of my chest?	ومغازل الأمطار تعجن شارعا
The rain spoils the quietness of streets	لرجا حصاه من النحيع الجامد
Sticky pebbles and solidity	وأنا أصيخ إلى خطاك أحسها
And I long to hear your steps	
I try to feel them	

## 2.2 The Struggle of the Forced Marriages

(IOM) describes marriage in Yemen as a formal relationship between two families with the primary purpose of legally producing children which impacts economic status in the immediate term with implications for future generations through inheritance rights. Further, in the Yemeni cultural context, marriage is an institution that may influence a family's political standing, as well as their honour, entailing a potential risk or benefit to the families that are party to the union. In Yemeni traditions, female, not male, sexuality is under constant scrutiny, since extra-marital sexual relations for men do not impact honour, unless harm or force is involved. Thus, Yemeni families traditionally have, and currently continue to have, the dominant role in selecting marriage partners for their young men and women. The religious and political establishments also play a significant role in regulating the institution and reflecting cultural and religious values of the society.

The poet discussed such an issue in his poetry long time ago where women were being forced into traditional marriages which later led to traumatic relationships full of contempt His poem *Aroos Alhuzen* "The Bride of Sorrow" recognizes this type of emotional struggle by depicting the sadness of the poet when hearing the sad cries of a young woman who has been arranged for her a traditional marriage. The poet succeeds in delivering the sad emotions that the young lady has suffered from. The title of the poem ironically ridicules the way women get married in Yemen. (Lines 1-4) well demonstrate how the auditory imagery works:

Her voice is full of tears,	صوتها دمع وأنغام صبايا
Rhythms of girlhood and Smiles	وابتسامت و أنات عرايا
Whenever she sang, ran from her mouth	كلما غنت جرى من فمها
A river full of songs and complaints	جدول من أغنيات و شكايا
Is she crying or singing or has she	أهي تبكي أم تغني أم لها
The melody of birds and groans of the masses?	نغم الطير و آهات البرايا ؟
Her voice is crying. Ah!!	صوتها يبكي و يشدو آه ما
	ذا وراء الصوت ما خلف الطوايا ؟

What is behind the sound, what is behind its intention?

The poet heard the weeping voice of the persona in the poem and confused it with laughter. He noticed a bitter feeling and a complaint. He wondered again whether she was singing or crying because the voice was beautiful and full of pain. Then he assured himself that she was crying however wondered about the reason that made her cry? It was obvious that she was sad at the decision made by the family. The poet had an ability to hear that emotional struggle of the young bride and beautifully depict it in such a manner which was uncommon. Her pain was shared when the poet used the exclamation term "Ah!" the poet was helpless to provide any kind of physical support against the social norms that forced her to marry out of her will.

I do not know.

لست أدري . صوتها يحرقني

Her voice burns me and my emotions

بشجوني إنه يدمي بكبا

Within me bled crying.

كلما طاف بسمعي صوتها

Every time I hear her sad cries

هزّ في الأعماق أوتار شجايا

It shakes the depths of my sad heart.

و سرى في خاطري مرتعشا

And in my mind I'm shivering

رعشة الطيف بأجفان العشا

(Lines 9-11) elaborate that the voice of the girl caused the poet some sort of terror that it either burnt his emotions or made him cry from the inside. The ability to transform that sad voice into a scary imagery of a girl tortured by a monster made the poet a close observer but only through hearing. The sadness of the poet is a form of rebel against the social norms and a form of support to all the forced women into marriages. He wanted to portray this inhumane enforcement as putting more shackles to Yemeni women.

No one will take care of my heart,

لم يرع قلبي سوى قلبي أنا

But my heart.

! لا ولا غدّيني شيء سوايا

And nothing will torment me,

جارتني ، ما أضيق الدنيا إذا

But myself.

لم تشقّ النفس في النفس زوايا

My neighbor, the world is a narrow path if

Your soul does not cut extra corners

The last (lines 23-24) of *Aroos Alhuzen* "The Bride of Sorrow" indicate the helplessness of the poet to help his neighbor who was forced to get married and only provided her with a commonsense advice that the world is filled with injustices and one must see those unjust actions from a different perspective so that injustice can seem less harmful.

### 2.3 The Struggle of Losing a Family Member

One of the worst emotional struggles that Yemeni women endure is the pain that comes at Eid celebration. But why do they feel sad at such a celebration? To understand it one need to know how Eid is celebrated in Yemen in order to really understand the type of struggle women may encounter in such a time. In Yemen, the celebration of Eid for many families' centers on women and that is by paying visits to family members especially ladies. The male relatives carry their Eid gifts and go their sisters or daughters to make them happy however there are orphaned or bereaved women who lost their dear ones due to war or death. Their Eid is filled with pain and sad memories.

Al-Baradouni was able to observe that type of struggle in his poem *Thakala Bela Za-air* "A Bereaved with no Visitor" which is written in his third poetry collection *Mdyenat Alqad* "The City of Tomorrow". He has depicted the life of a young woman who was observing the people arrange for the celebration of Eid and how she was spiritless because she has neither father nor brother to pay a visit and give Eid gifts. The young woman has recalled all the memories of her dead father who left her to a horrible uncle who would treat her like something

for steal. (Lines 16- 19) show the auditory imageries employed by the poet in the poem that need to be highlighted:

The radio broadcasted filling the space	وثرثر المذيع ملء المدى
O Eid, O Eid, It never tires	يا عيد ، يا عيد ، ولم يتعب
(Al-Haymi) and his son shouted	واستنطق ((الحيمي)) فنغرافه
Along with (Al-Qatabi)	((وصاح وابناه مع ((القعطي
Gathered cannons like angry fools	زمر وحشد ها هنا أو
No, today I will not be able to stand	مدافع كالأحمق المغضب
The loud noise turns up even louder	لا ، لن أطيع اليوم أمواجه
	من صخب عال الى أصخب

The poet has used the auditory terms in order to measure up the degree of emotional struggle felt by the young woman. The majority of people use visual electronic appliances such as the television but since the poet was blind he has unconsciously used the auditory device such as the radio to tell about the coming of the Eid. The song of "O Eid" is a beautiful song to hear the day of Eid in Yemen but to her it was a song that bought all the sad memories of her dead relative. The sound or joy of her neighbors Al-Haymi and his son has triggered unspoken of kind of pain that she described them as angry fools. The young woman was convinced that it was going to be impossible to stand the day while that noise was loud.

You used to enjoy calling my name	تلتد باسمي تستجيد ابنتي
While my daughter answers	يتمتم ابني باسمك الأعدب
My son used to mutter your sweetest name	تقول ((كعكي)) لم تذق مثله
You used to say that (my kaak) are the most delicious	((كقهوتي)) في العمر لم تشرب
As (my coffee) in your lifetime had not tasted better	يعيدني تدليلك المشتهى
Your pampers used to take me back in time	صبية كالطائر الازغب
A young girl cuddled like a fluffy bird	

(Lines 25-27) describe the obviousness of auditory terms when the young woman was recalling one of her memories when her dad used to come early in the morning before the sun rise. The sweetness of calling her name used to be a nice hobby for her dad. The happiness of her children when their grandfather reached the house to congratulate them and give them their Eid gifts was welcomed joyously through mutters of her kids happy for his arrival. The special treatment she enjoyed from her father was a key to her ongoing sadness while the sort of complement he used to tell her about how especial she made things was a sort of nostalgia that made her recall her sweet childhood. This emotional struggle of women expressed in Baradouni poetry using the craft of auditory imagery proves the great awareness of the poet for such issues caused women pain.

#### 2.4 The Struggle of Mothers with Crippled Children:

Another issue that Yemeni women endure while raising their kids is taking full responsibility in caring for their disabled kids. This aspect in dealing with crippled kids needs to be improved in the Yemeni community. What makes it seem worst is the fact that males always hold mothers responsible for any kind of genetic disorder happening to the kids giving themselves excuses to polygamy and to further social problems. Consequently, the relationship between mothers and their crippled kids stands solid.

The poet has voiced up the agony that mothers endure whenever raising their crippled children by speaking about his own mother who took care of him since the day of his blindness. The poem that dealt with

such an issue was entitled *Ummi* "My Mother" which has been taken from his first poetry collection called *Mn Ard Biliqis* "From the Land of Sheba" In this poem the poet moaned his dead mother and simultaneously yearned for the days they were both together. He expressed his sadness and agony while recalling his mother's kindness at the hard times. The poem is a momentum to the poet's mother and at the same time epitomizes the kindness of Yemeni women.

Here I am, mom today	ها أنا يا أمي اليوم فتى
A man of good reputation	طائر الصيت بعيد الشهاب
Filled history with melody and echo	أملأ التاريخ لحنا وصدى
And the world sings my immortal song	وتغني في ربا الخلد ربابي
Mother, Hear my voice and dance	فاسمعي يا أم صوتي وارقصي
In your grave like the maids of paradise.	من وراء القبر كالجورا الكعاب

(Lines 29-31) continue the auditory imagery where the poet appealed his dead mother to hear the melody and echo that he filled the books of history. Instead of using the term "read" since she is sighted and can see he has used the term "hear". The poet wanted to reassure his mother about how his future turned up to be as he was trying to erase that emotional pain that she carried with her to the grave. The poet pleaded his mother to be joyous whenever she hears the great fame that her son achieved and to dance to that melodic voice like the maids of paradise.

### 3.0 Conclusion

The struggles of Yemeni women had been depicted by many Yemeni poets. Abdullah Al-Baradouni was one those Arabic poets whose skill had not only exceeded the visual description but also the auditory one in so many fields of life. There have been many struggles that Yemeni women underwent according to the poet. His auditory imagery focuses on struggles such as the loss of a husband in a war, the forced marriage for young women, the meaningless celebration of Eid without dear family members and finally the pain that mothers endure when individually raise physically challenged kids. In a patriarchal society such unarticulated struggles are seen as unproblematic. In support, this paper highlights those struggles that our women for years have experienced and contributes in any sort of egalitarian awareness in the community.

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